UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/95
30 January 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 30 JANUARY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith my statement regarding the pending resolution of the Security Council on the situation in Georgia.

May I request your kind assistance in circulating this statement as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

97-02927 (E) 310197

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Annex

Statement dated 30 January 1997 by the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations

I should like to thank the members of the group of countries known as Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, and the Russian Federation as facilitator, for their tireless efforts aimed at achieving the comprehensive settlement of the conflict in my country. Allow me also to welcome the establishment of the Human Rights Office in Sukhumi. This important step will undoubtedly improve the monitoring system and may serve as well as a deterrent to serious human rights violations in the region.

I have to note with regret that, despite the strong will of the international community to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, the peace negotiations remain stalled and there seems to be no perspective in the offing for a constructive dialogue with the Abkhaz authorities.

Every negotiation, in the nature of things, entails give and take. Regrettably, the Abkhaz authorities fail to consider this a moral category. They blatantly ignore all our concessions, including those on the issue of the political status of the region, and attempt to impose a plan conducive only to the dismemberment of my country.

In utter disregard of the position of the international community expressed in the statement of the President of the Security Council of 22 October 1996 (S/PRST/1996/43), whereby the Abkhaz authorities were urged to call off the planned parliamentary elections until the political status of Abkhazia was determined, the separatists staged this farce on 23 November 1996 and seriously aggravated the situation.

We strongly believe that under present circumstances, when more than 80 per cent of the Georgian population has been forcibly expelled from Abkhazia, when 300,000 refugees and displaced persons remain homeless, disenfranchised and humiliated, and in the face of the present demographic conditions, this action was not only unlawful but also immoral, threatening to damage the peace process beyond repair.

The growing number of violations of the Moscow agreement that are stressed in the report (S/1997/47) has long been the subject of our deep concern. We had anticipated this dangerous tendency and repeatedly called for the decisive measures to revitalize the peace process and to keep in check the outbreak of uncontrollable actions.

The Georgian population in the conflict zone is extremely vulnerable in the face of the armed Abkhaz militia, which is ruthlessly terrorizing virtually defenceless people. One more Georgian family was brutally murdered at the hands of the separatists on 9 December 1996.

The laying of mines and other explosive devices is also on the rise and is causing serious casualties among the civilian population and international personnel.

The effective functioning of the military observers is extremely important to us. We believe that serious demining operations should be undertaken in order to create safe and secure conditions for the population as well as for the resumption of the full-scale patrolling of the region.

My people have always counted on the help of the United Nations and have repeatedly expressed their confidence in the Organization and in the international community as a whole.

Regrettably, with the passage of time this attitude is showing signs of changing. The main reason for this tendency is a protracted negotiating process which hampers the return of refugees and displaced persons.

We are particularly concerned at their unspeakable living conditions and growing discontent. At a time when the average monthly income is just $27, the majority of more than 300,000 refugees and displaced persons do not have accommodations that meet minimal requirements of sanitation and hygiene. These people reside in half-demolished public buildings and even in farmhouses and stables. Only last year, the Ministry of Health Care registered dangerous outbreaks of tuberculosis and hepatitis in western Georgia. The rate of suicides and child mortality is also growing.

The Government of Georgia is doing everything in its capacity to diffuse the intensity of population dissatisfaction and keep emotions at bay, but as time goes on this becomes increasingly difficult.

The repatriation of refugees is the foremost issue. If not solved, it will put the whole peace process at stake. We are confident that progress in this matter cannot be achieved without the active role of the United Nations. The efforts of the Russian Federation as facilitator are also crucial and can determine the outcome of their entire peace process.

In its final documents adopted during the Budapest and Lisbon summit meetings, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) condemned the ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population, resulting in mass destruction and forcible expulsion of the predominantly Georgian population from Abkhazia.

We believe that the Security Council should also be outspoken on this matter. Although the Council condemned the ethnically related killings in the region, we are inclined to think that this does not reflect to the full extent the scope and dimension of the crimes perpetrated by the separatists. Indeed, the time has come to call things by their right name and to hold those involved responsible.

The Government of Georgia has more than once expressed the political will to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. The efforts of

President Shevardnadze directed towards restoring stability in the entire region of the Caucasus are quite well known to the international community.

I wish to stress the importance of intensifying direct contacts with the Abkhaz side, though neither these attempts nor international efforts have so far managed to thaw out their stubbornness.

We believe that the United Nations and its Security Council will continue its ceaseless efforts to revive the peace process with a new impetus and will reaffirm by deed the decisive role of the Organization in resolving this dispute.